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# Trump In Cash Crisis—As Campaign Chief's LLC's \$19.2m Pay Revealed

HOW MUCH?

Chris LaCivita, the Republican strategist entrusted with returning Trump to the White House, has eye-opening deals with the campaign, the Daily Beast has learned.



Michael Iskoff

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EXCLUSIVE



Animated GIF by Thomas Levinson/The Daily Beast/Getty

The consulting firm of Donald Trump's White House campaign's co-manager has raked in \$19.2 million and counting from the Republican nominee's political operation in just two years, the Daily Beast has learned.

Chris LaCivita's firm, Advancing Strategies, reaped \$15.7 million in 2022 when

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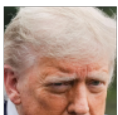
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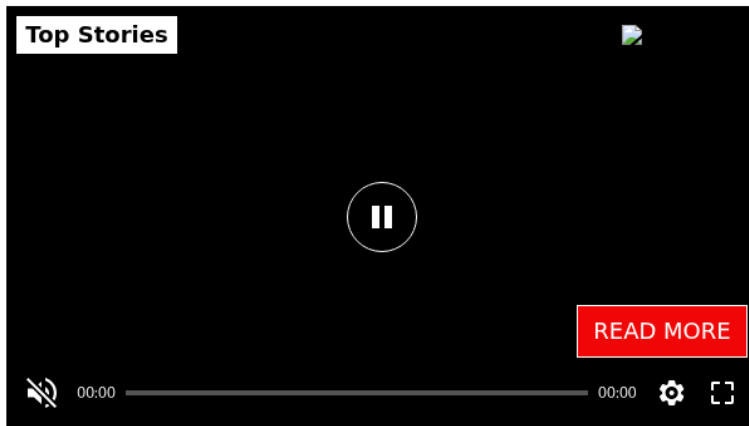


political operation in just two years, the Daily Beast has learned.

Cameron Adams



Chris LaCivita's firm, Advancing Strategies, reaped \$15.7 million in 2022 when the influential GOP operative served as a "strategic consultant" and "media ad buyer" to a Trump-affiliated super PAC, campaign finance records show. Then, after joining the Trump campaign, he negotiated three contracts that gave his tiny LLC a generous cut of Trump's TV and digital ads, direct mail and other campaign spending. His LLC also collected retainers that at times amounted to \$75,000 a month, according to multiple sources familiar with the campaign's finances and campaign finance records.

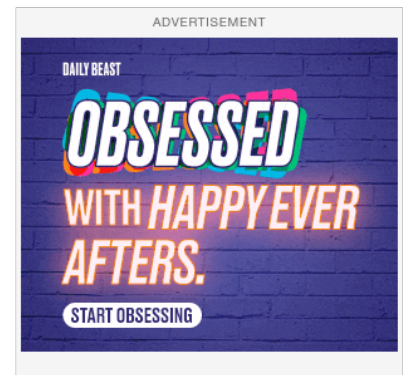
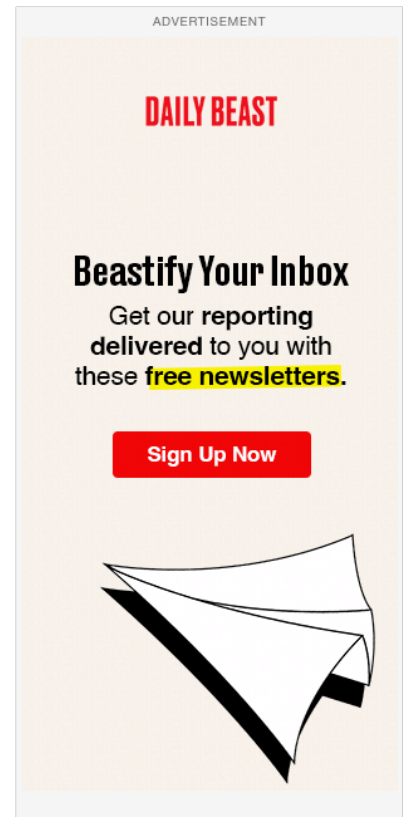


That has netted LaCivita's consulting firm \$3.4 million from the campaign and the Republican National Committee combined, records show, and there are plans to award his firm nearly \$5 million more by the time the election is over—including a \$150,000 bonus if Trump wins, according to a source familiar with an informal and controversial "audit" ordered up by another campaign senior adviser, Corey Lewandowski. The campaign disputes the figure for the additional monies owed to LaCivita, but did not offer an alternative estimate.



Trump's campaign team is led by both LaCivita (left), whose LLC has been paid \$19.2m so far via the campaign and two PACs, and Susie Wiles (center).

The campaign's other co-manager, Susie Wiles, has been paid \$685,000 from the campaign through her own consulting firm with monthly retainers that



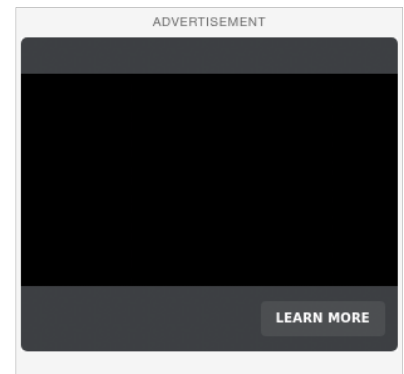
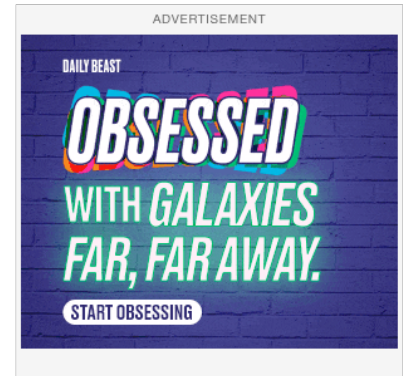
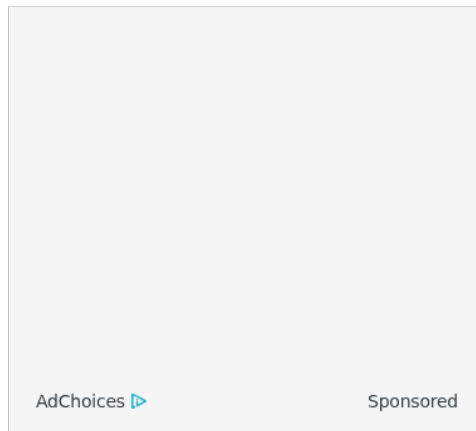
Trump's campaign team is led by both LaCivita (left), whose LLC has been paid \$19.2m so far via the campaign and two PACs, and Susie Wiles (center).

The campaign's other co-manager, Susie Wiles, has been paid \$685,000 from the campaign through her own consulting firm with monthly retainers that ranged between \$25,000 and \$30,000. Jennifer O'Malley Dillon, Kamala Harris' campaign manager, is paid \$13,442 a month, campaign finance records show.

It is hardly unheard of for political consultants or their firms to collect huge sums from presidential campaigns and super political action committees, or PACs. And LaCivita, a veteran political knife-fighter, is not the first to get paid as a senior adviser while simultaneously collecting commissions for media ad buys and direct mail—a practice some describe as “double-dipping.”

But campaign finance experts say the payments to LaCivita's firm are unusually high, and potentially raise questions about whether his personal stake in the campaign's ad buys and direct mail operations has influenced key decisions about how the campaign has been spending its money.

“I've never heard of a package that rich in a presidential campaign,” said Trevor Potter, a former chairman of the Federal Election Commission who served as the chief counsel for John McCain's presidential campaign. Calling the totals flowing to LaCivita's company “eye-opening,” Potter said they also inevitably raise questions as to what extent others in the campaign had approved or were even aware of them.



### Corey Lewandowski: More Travel With Trump Amid Staffing War

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The stunning sums being made by 57-year-old LaCivita's firm, have other Republicans accusing him of “cashing in,” even while the campaign itself is strapped for cash and badly lagging behind the Kamala Harris campaign in spending power.

LaCivita defended the payments and fired back at his detractors in a response he emailed to the Daily Beast.



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LaCivita defended the payments and fired back at his detractors in a response he emailed to the Daily Beast.

“This entire story is fabricated nonsense, cooked up by talentless grifters who lack the integrity and skill to contribute to President Trump’s continued electoral success,” he said. “Every member of this team, myself included, has been fairly and responsibly compensated, with the priority of electing President Trump at the forefront of every strategic and financial decision we have made.

“While the individuals responsible for attempting this kamikaze operation are known, their self-serving attempt to defame me will not distract us from continuing to deliver for President Trump and winning this election.”

Advancing Strategies, LaCivita’s company, has no apparent website and appears to be headquartered in his home, which is outside Richmond, Virginia, according to state corporate records.



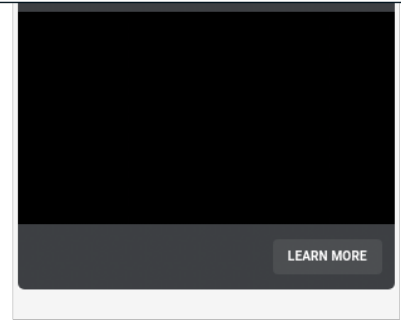
LaCivita pushed back on the revelation of his firm’s \$19.2m, accusing it of being orchestrated by a “kamikaze” wing of Republicans.

A senior campaign official argued that the amounts recorded on campaign finance records as being paid to Advancing Strategies are misleading because a chunk of these are “pass through” payments to other vendors. The official said all of LaCivita’s contracts—which were signed by the campaign’s treasurer—had been approved by the campaign’s lawyers.

Questions over LaCivita’s consulting fees come at a sensitive time, with the Trump operation lagging far behind Harris’ fundraising juggernaut. Her team announced last week it had raised more than \$1 billion, a staggering amount that allows Democrats to flood battleground states with attack ads in the final stretch of a neck-and-neck race.

That has left Trump increasingly grumpy in private meetings with donors, reportedly even at times berating some for not coughing up enough cash.

His campaign, which had raised a little more than \$300 million by the end of



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That has left Trump increasingly grumpy in private meetings with donors, reportedly even at times berating some for not coughing up enough cash.

His campaign, which had raised a little more than \$300 million by the end of August, is hoping to help bridge the gap with a gala fundraiser at Mar-a-Lago this Wednesday complete with a “candlelight dinner” and private round tables—for couples willing to give or raise \$924,600.

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The Trump campaign, run by LaCivita, has become increasingly concerned about its huge disadvantage to Harris. Trump himself is running a fundraiser at Mar-a-Lago on Wednesday and while the maximum amounts are eye-watering, it is possible to be there for as little as \$5,000.

📷 The Daily Beast

Couples who donate \$250,000 or raise \$500,000 also get a roundtable, but without the candlelight, an invitation shared with the Daily Beast shows. The lowest entry point is \$5,000 per individual. All contributions go toward a joint fundraising committee to benefit the presidential campaign, Trump’s Save America PAC, the Republican National Committee and state GOP parties.

LaCivita’s deals mean that if the cash from the Mar-a-Lago event is spent on ads, his LLC will benefit from those, too.

The questions about LaCivita’s consulting fees have been quietly circulating in GOP circles for some time.

Last year, a super PAC backing Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis circulated an

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Last year, a super PAC backing Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis circulated an "opposition research" dossier depicting LaCivita as a grifter with no political principles. The memo, a copy of which was obtained by the Daily Beast, highlighted the huge sums LaCivita's firm had collected from a Trump super PAC—\$15.7 million from Make America Great Again—during the 2022 midterm election cycle, contending the payments were far in excess of what LaCivita had received in previous campaigns.


The memo accused LaCivita of "cashing in on Trump" and "personal enrichment." (It also sought to portray LaCivita as a political flip-flopper, noting that in 2015, when he was working for Rand Paul's presidential campaign, he co-authored news op-eds describing Trump as a "fake conservative" and a "chameleon." The senior campaign official responded: "I don't think anybody questions his bona fides" as a pro-Trump conservative.)

The issue of LaCivita's salary and campaign spending was revived in August, when Trump brought back Lewandowski, his campaign manager in 2016, in an apparent effort to regain momentum after Harris started to pull ahead in public polling.

### 'It's Ka-Ma-La': CNN Anchor Ends Interview With Trump Aide

**'YOU'RE A MATURE GROWN UP'**

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Known as a combative and polarizing figure, Lewandowski—who wasn't taking a salary—was given no clear role in the campaign, although at times he reportedly referred to himself as "the chairman." He soon showed up at campaign headquarters and started interviewing aides about how campaign funds were being spent.


He then ordered the informal "audit," or review of the campaign's books, resulting in a nasty public blow-up over his role in the campaign.

"Corey was going around and acting like he was a Bain consultant," one Trump insider told the Daily Beast, referring to Bain & Company, the global management consulting firm once headed by Mitt Romney. "People thought it was weird."

Lewandowski's efforts were widely viewed as an attempt to trigger Trump's notorious fear of being ripped off. It was no surprise that Lewandowski focused on LaCivita, who he apparently viewed as a rival for power.

LaCivita had joined the Trump campaign shortly after the November 2022 elections when he signed a contract that guaranteed him a monthly retainer of \$30,000, the Daily Beast has established. The figure is especially striking given that Wiles, his co-campaign manager, wasn't taking a salary at all.

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Lewandowski, who was seen with Eric Trump arriving on Trump's private plane ahead of his only debate with Kamala Harris, was seen as targeting LaCivita in a power struggle by launching the "audit" of campaign spending.

Eduardo Munoz/Reuters

In addition, the contract gave LaCivita's firm a 3 percent cut of the first \$100 million the campaign spent on TV ads, with commission dropping to 1.5 percent on the next \$100 million.

He was also promised a \$150,000 bonus if Trump won the Republican nomination, a standard arrangement for political campaigns. The contract was signed by Bradley Crate, the campaign's treasurer.

Asked to what degree Trump signed off on the details, the senior campaign official said: "Any and all conversations that senior staff have with President Trump are confidential. All contracts were negotiated and approved by legal counsel as is appropriate."

The official added that campaign finance reports showing hefty payments to Advancing Strategies under the contract were misleading because "much" of these funds were "pass through" payments to other vendors and "was not income" to LaCivita's company.

44

***"Corey was going around and acting like he was a Bain consultant. People thought it was weird."***

"There is a difference between an LLC being paid funds vs collecting a personal 'take,'" the official said.

LaCivita's LLC's compensation grew even more in June of 2023 when he renegotiated his contract to give an additional \$45,000 a month retainer for "extra contract consulting." Increasing his monthly take to \$75,000. The new

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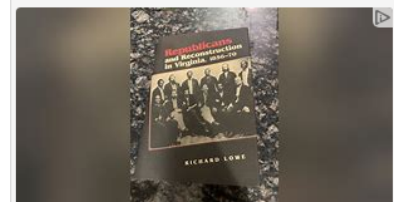


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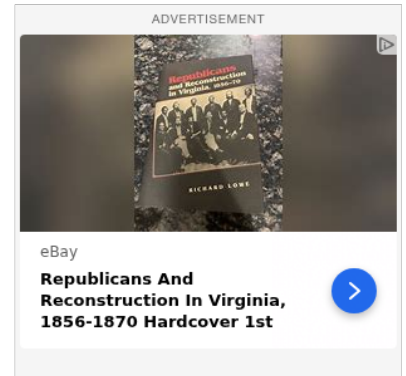


‘take,’” the official said.

LaCivita’s LLC’s compensation grew even more in June of 2023 when he renegotiated his contract to give an additional \$45,000 a month retainer for “voter contact consulting,” boosting his monthly take to \$75,000. The new contract also added an extra four per cent commission for LaCivita’s firm on all campaign digital ads on top of the 3 per cent commission it was still receiving on TV ads.

Throughout the Republican primary contest, the campaign spent heavily, paying LaCivita’s Advancing Strategies firm \$1.1 million for placing TV ads and for video production services, as well as \$776,000 for direct mail. One of the questions raised by Lewandowski was whether some of these payouts, especially for direct mail, were the best use of campaign funds given Trump’s commanding lead in the polls over his GOP rivals throughout the primary season.

The Trump campaign official defended the large expenditures for direct mail by LaCivita’s company during the primary season, saying “in primaries, the voting electorate is older, relies less on digital advertising to obtain information and mail has consistently proven its worth.”



LaCivita flashed a v-sign during the Nevada caucuses in February. But details of his contracts have raised questions over whether he overspent on ads during the primary to his own advantage.

Patrick T. Fallon/AFP/Getty Images

By April of this year, Trump had clinched the GOP nomination and LaCivita renegotiated his contract again. This time, the \$45,000 retainer to pay Advancing Strategies for voter contacts was dropped after the Federal Election Commission apparently loosened rules that allowed much of that activity to be handed off to super PACs, which can raise unlimited funds. But the voter contact retainer was replaced by another \$20,000-a-month retainer from the Republican National Committee. And, having guided Trump to victory in the GOP primaries and collected his first \$150,000, LaCivita’s firm is in line for another one of equal size if Trump emerges victorious.

The source familiar with the review of the campaign’s books conducted by Lewandowski said it showed that Advancing Strategies was also due another \$4.7 million from the campaign, bringing the total estimated take to \$7.7

another one of equal size if Trump emerges victorious.

The source familiar with the review of the campaign's books conducted by Lewandowski said it showed that Advancing Strategies was also due another \$4.7 million from the campaign, bringing the total estimated take to \$7.7 million. The Trump campaign disputed those figures, but did not offer what it considers correct numbers.

Lewandowski, who still travels on Trump's campaign plane, declined comment for this story.

LaCivita, a Marine who fought in the first Gulf War, had toiled for years in Virginia political races. But he burst onto the national scene when he crafted the brutal "Swift Boat" ads that derided Kerry's military record in Vietnam—a controversial line of attack that Sen. John McCain called "dishonest and dishonorable." LaCivita, for his part, has consistently defended the ads as faithfully representing the views of some Vietnam vets, telling Mother Jones this year, "I don't really care what people think."



LaCivita was the architect of the "Swift Boat Veterans for Truth" campaign in 2004, which attacked John Kerry, accusing him of lying about his Vietnam record. The attacks were dismissed as smears but Kerry narrowly lost to George W. Bush.

C-SPAN

The ads cemented LaCivita's reputation as a no-holds-barred political brawler, one he reinforced four years later when he founded a political dark money group that ran ads trying to tie Barack Obama to former Weather Underground radical Bill Ayers.

"What he's mainly known for is being cutthroat," said Larry Sabato, a University of Virginia professor who once wrote a book on political consultants, and has known LaCivita for decades. "This is a guy who will come after you with anything he could. He's among the toughest I've ever met in politics. In that sense, he's perfect for a Trump campaign of revenge and retribution."

But Sabato added that he's not surprised by the huge amounts his firm collecting working for Trump. In his own conversations with LaCivita, the operative had a complaint. "He felt he was dramatically underpaid in some prior campaigns," Sabato said. LaCivita "wanted a sinecure," he added, and appears to have found one—a lucrative one at that—by tying himself to Donald Trump.



prior campaigns,” Sabato said. LaCivita “wanted a sinecure,” he added, and appears to have found one—a lucrative one at that—by tying himself to Donald Trump.

**Editor’s Note: The original version of this article mistakenly reported that LaCivita’s firm had received a total of \$22 million from Trump’s campaign and affiliated PACs. Based on a further review of FEC records, the correct total is \$19.2 million. The Beast regrets the error. The article has also been updated to make clear that payments were to LaCivita’s LLC not to LaCivita personally.**

**Editor’s Note: Based on information from a Trump campaign official, an earlier version of this story said that Wiles, the campaign’s other manager, was a volunteer. In fact, she is paid through Right Coast Strategies, a Florida consulting firm she founded.**

Michael Isikoff is an award-winning investigative journalist and best-selling author who has been at the forefront of reporting on many of the biggest scandals and controversies of our time. He has served as an investigative reporter for The Washington Post, Newsweek, NBC News and Yahoo News, winning, among others, a National Magazine Award; the Gerald R. Ford Award for Reporting on the Presidency; the Edgar Allan Poe Award; the Edward R. Murrow Award. He is the author of four New York Times best-selling books.



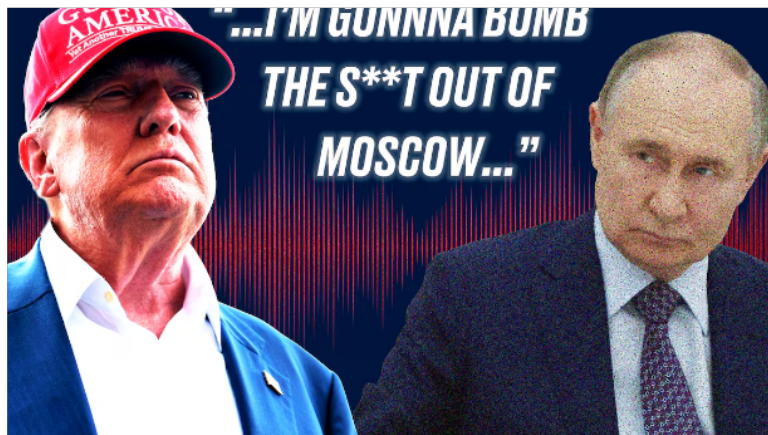
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